

# Halos of Happiness

Michael Keaveney

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in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Masters of Fine Arts in  
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Approved by Elin O'hara Slavick, Sabine Gruffat and Joy Drury Cox.

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## Halos of Happiness

“That nothing last forever is perhaps our favorite thing to forget. And forgetting is the ruin of memory, its collapse, decay, shattering and eventual fading away into nothingness.” - Rebecca Solnit<sup>i</sup>

At the core of photography is a resistance to forgetting, decay and fading away, its history is filled with attempts at preserving people and places. Through the reproduction of printed materials, photography attempts to combat the transient nature of the world around us, a place that is always susceptible to change. The means by which photographic prints are reproduced have changed with the progression of time and the advancement in technology. From darkroom chemistry consisting of silver and dyes to digital technologies' using of ink and data, each advancement promises a longer lifespan to fix the image in time. However, with every exposure to light, air and time, printed images like their subjects degrade and change. Reproduction methods and recording technologies become obsolete and eventually context is lost, leaving behind futile attempts at permanence, abandoned archives and outdated recording devices.

I use appropriation, erasure, assemblage, and physical and digital manipulation to illuminate the ephemeral nature that is inherent to photography. Photography's lost and forgotten archives and obsolete devices become the raw materials for my practice. One example of these materials is the chemically produced 4x6 print. Surpassed in ease of production and longevity of life by the inkjet print, the production of this once popular chemical process has almost come to a complete halt, and what remains of it are the snapshots and photo albums of the past. Devoid of personal meaning to me these images resemble what Jason Wee describes as “compositional configurations in *toto*, and not any one thing in particular”<sup>ii</sup>, they are repeated representations of a highly documented world, these snapshots exist for the sole purpose of personal memento. An acknowledgment of vernacular photography's place within an already visually a world in which everything has been

photographed, paired with a removal of personal connection allows me to approach these images simply as a material.

In *Halos of Happiness* a project whose title I derived from Gaston Bachelard's writing on memory and the ways in which we distort it over time<sup>iii</sup>, I collected and assembled found 4x6 photographs that largely depict the landscape of the United States. These images contain repeated representations of a landscape that is just as, if not more transient than the analog photographic tools used to depict it. I assembled them into large scale quilts that reference the sheer quantity of images that were produced by this now obsolete process, as well as the vast scale of the landscape. Using bleach, a chemical used in the original creation of these 4x6 prints I erased and manipulated these assemblages into dissolving gradients. These fading quilts point to the growing obsolescence of the analog photographic materials used to construct them and the growing transient nature of the landscape within the modern built environment.

The shift from the material nature of analog photographic production into the seemingly dematerialization of digital signifies our resistance to decay. Because while the unstable chemical nature of analog photography eventually decays, the digital seeks a sense of timelessness. In his essay "The Art of Decay" Jacob Mikanowski writes "One of the functions of art is to give back what technology takes away. And what technology takes away most often now is a sense of age."<sup>iv</sup>, this statement highlights our use of current technologies in an attempt to avoid the subject of aging and decay. New technologies come and go so rapidly that they never fully experience decay, they appear timeless within what Robert Smithson has referred to as "a utopia without a base"<sup>v</sup>. Throughout my practice I subject both analog and digital photographic technologies to the process of decay in order to expose our current resistance to it and to foreground the beauty that becomes buried with that resistance. Ruins place us within a timeline that extends beyond the individual human experience, they allow us to contemplate the successes and failures of the past and force us to consider possible futures.



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<sup>i</sup> Rebecca Solnet. "Storming the Gates of Paradise" Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007. 254.

<sup>ii</sup> Jason Wee, "Landscape as Exhausted Form: The Nonsite and Joan Fontcuberta's Landscapes of Landscapes", Art Papers, Vol. 30, no.3, 2006. 25.

<sup>iii</sup> Gaston Bachelard, "La Poetique de l'espace" Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1958: trans. Maria Jolas, "The Poetics of Space" New York: Orion Press, 1964. 59.

<sup>iv</sup> Jacob Mikanowski, "The Art of Decay", <https://thepointmag.com/2015/criticism/the-art-of-decay>, 2015.

<sup>v</sup> Robert Smithson, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey" Artforum, December 1967, 55



**Michael Keaveney**

UNC-CH Thesis Defense  
Spring 2019



*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2018*



*Halos of Happiness #1-3*  
Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and Bleach.  
12x8'  
(Install at the Durham Fruit  
Company, Durham NC)





JMW Turner, The Chancel and Crossing of Tintern Abbey, Looking Towards the East Window, 1794.



Joel Sternfeld, Looking South on an Afternoon in June, 2000.





Robert Smithson, The Bridge Monument Showing Wooden Sidewalk, From a Tour of Monuments of Passaic, NJ, 1967.

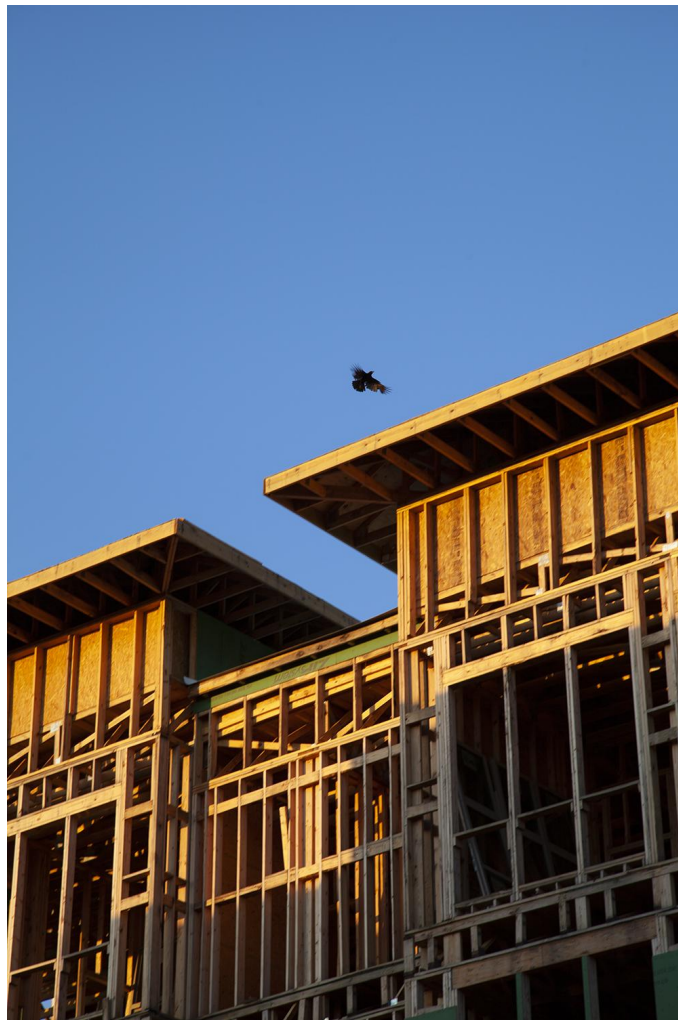


Darryl W. Moran, Armorcast:  
Abandoned Factory, Birdsboro  
PA, 2010.

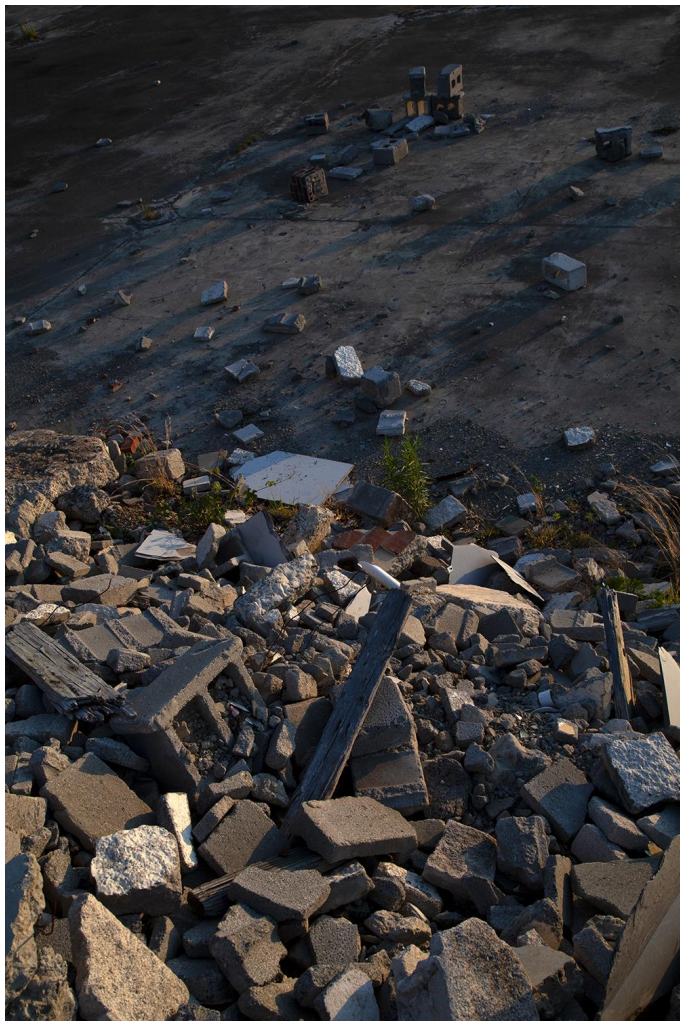




Armorcast Demolition Video, 2016



*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2018*

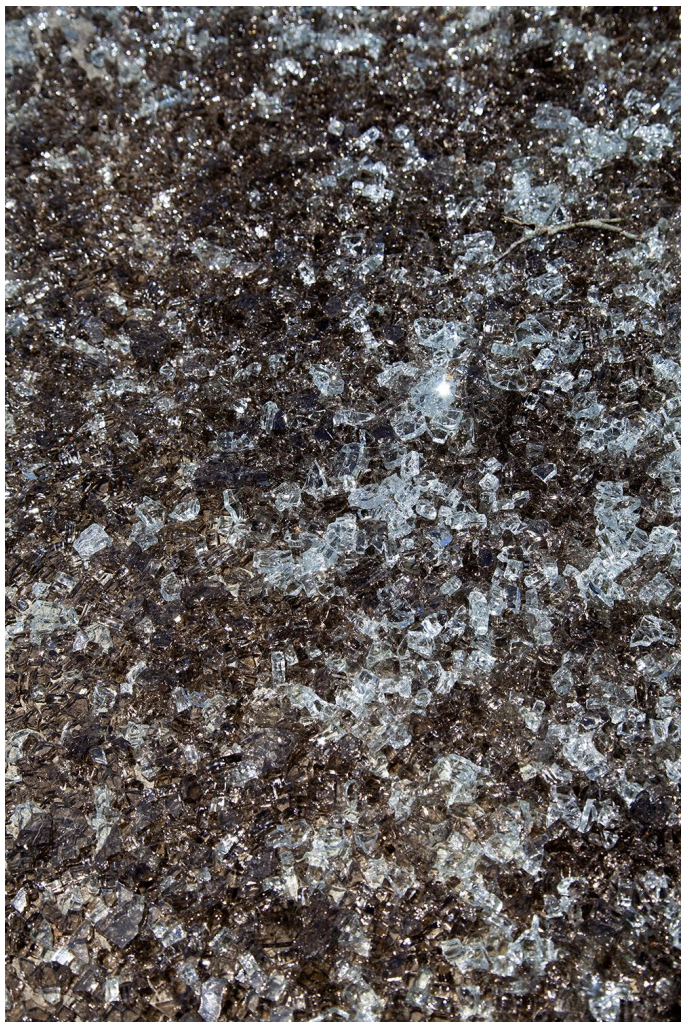


*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2018*



*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2018*





*Untitled, from "Sunday Paintings", 2018*





*Untitled, from "Sunday Paintings", 2018*



*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2018*





*Untitled*, from “*Sunday Paintings*”,  
2019





*Untitled, from "Sunday  
Paintings", 2019*



Adams Theater,  
Marchand Meffre,  
2007.





Robert Smithson, Nonsite (Essen  
Soil and Mirrors), 1969.



*Documenting a Pile #1*  
Silver Gelatin Photo Paper, 2018  
15:53



*Documenting a Pile #2*  
Silver Gelatin Photo Paper, 2018  
15:51

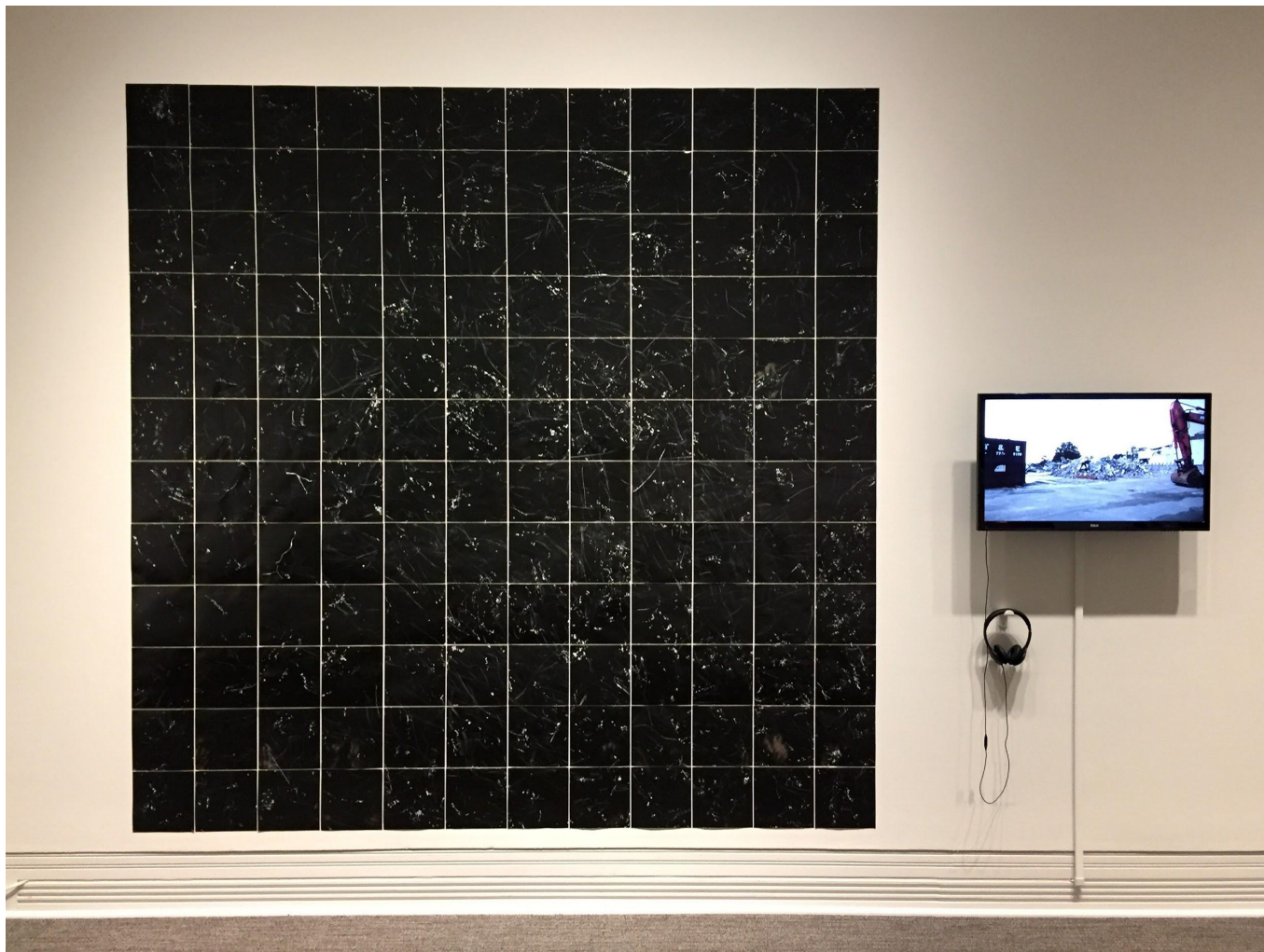


*Documenting a Pile #1*  
Silver Gelatin Photo Paper,  
2018  
(detail)





*Documenting a Pile #1*  
Silver Gelatin Photo Paper,  
2018  
(detail)



*Documenting a Pile #1*  
Silver Gelatin Photo Paper  
and Video Loop (15:53)  
8'x8'  
2018

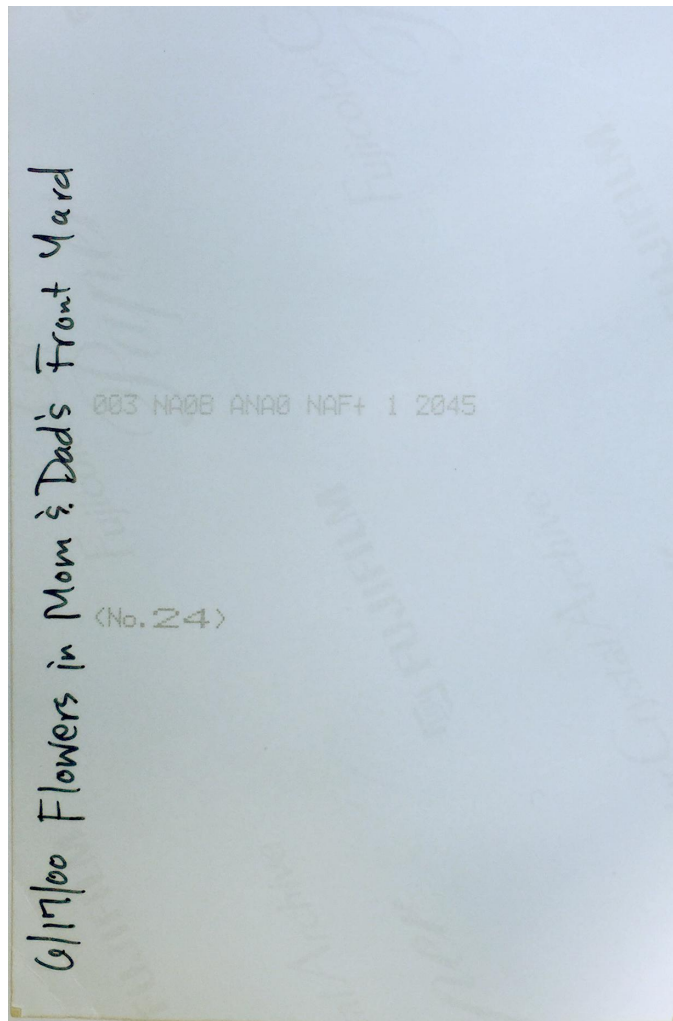


William Henry Fox Talbot,  
Maidenhair Fern, c.1839.





Front of a found  
4x6 print.



Front and back of  
found 4x6  
photograph.



Collected 4x6  
photographs.





Halos of Happiness,  
Process, 2019.



Found Photograph,  
resembling a friend.



Halos of Happiness,  
Process, 2019.





Halos of Happiness #3,  
Found c-print, bleach  
and varnish. (detail)  
2019.



*Halos of Happiness #1*  
Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and Bleach.  
12x8'



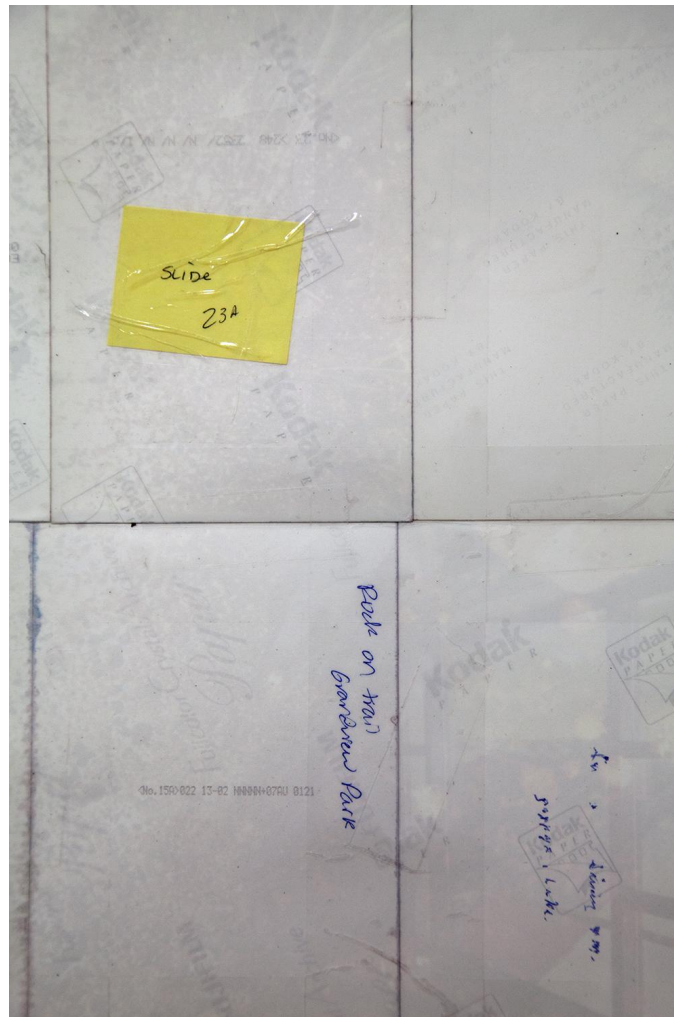


*Halos of Happiness #1*  
*(detail)*

Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and  
Bleach.  
12x8'



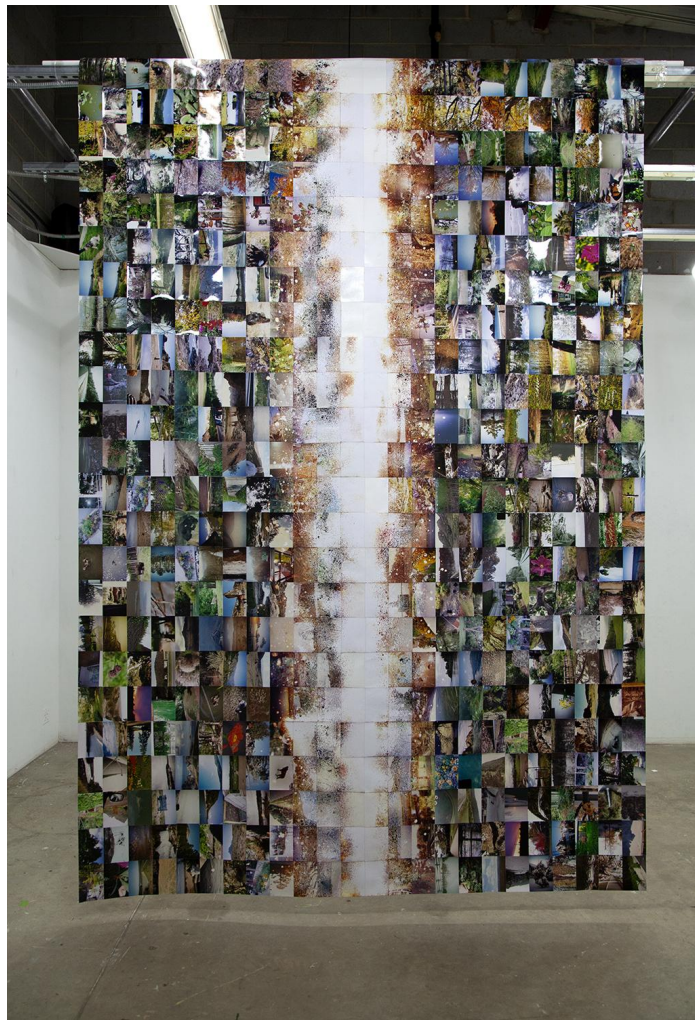
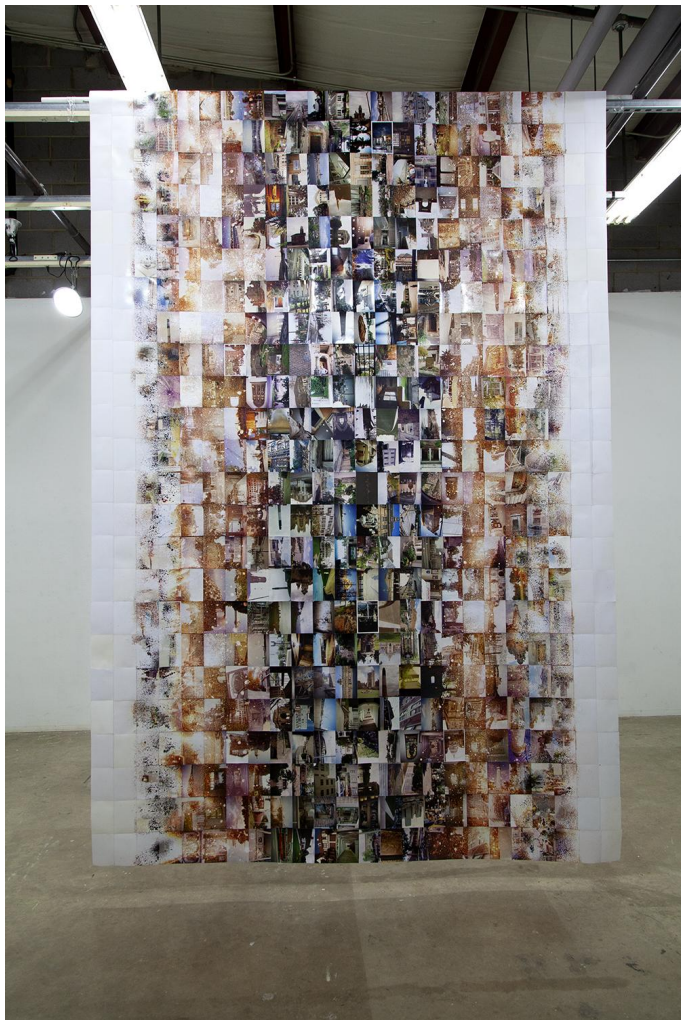
*Halos of Happiness #1-2*  
(back)  
Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and  
Bleach.  
12x8'



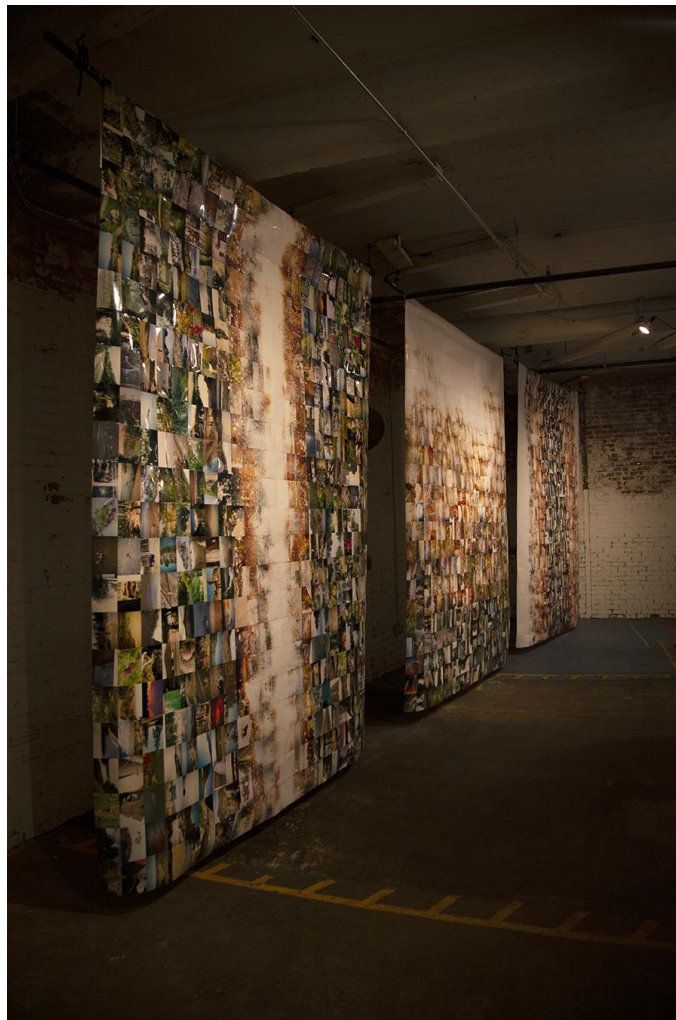
*Halos of Happiness #3*  
(back)

Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and  
Bleach.  
12x8'





*Halos of Happiness #2-3*  
Found 4x6 photographs,  
Tape, Varnish and  
Bleach.  
12x8'



*Halos of Happiness #1-3*  
Found 4x6 photographs, Tape,  
Varnish and Bleach.  
12x8'  
(Install at the Durham Fruit  
Company, Durham NC)





Matthew Brandt,  
Pictures from Wai'anāe,  
2015.



computer parts - by owner

<< scanner



save search

all owner dealer

- ☐ search titles only
- ☐ has image
- ☐ posted today
- ☐ bundle duplicates
- ☐ include nearby areas

MILES FROM ZIP  
miles: from zip

PRICE  
min max

MAKE AND MODEL  
make / model

- ☐ cryptocurrency ok
- ☐ delivery available

language of posting  
condition

reset

update search

- safety tips
- prohibited items
- product recalls
- avoiding scams

\$109



☆ Apr 29 **SYMBOL LS2208 GENERAL PURPOSE BARCODE SCANNER (Like New)** \$109 (South Chapel Hill Durham North)

\$149



☆ Apr 29 **General Purpose 1D Barcode SCANNER (Completely New)** \$149 (South Chapel Hill Durham North Chatham)

\$10



☆ Apr 27 **Canon flat bed scanner** \$10 (West Raleigh)

\$80



☆ Apr 12 **Mustek ScanExpress A3-sized USB Scanner** \$80 (Wakefield)

\$80



☆ Apr 11 **Canon CanoScan Lide 210 Flatbed Scanner** \$80 (Western & Gorman)

\$900



☆ Apr 2 **Brother MFC-8950DW Professional Printer, Scanner, Fax Machine** \$900 (Kernersville)

\$35



\$50



\$60



Screenshot from  
Craigslst search for  
"scanner".



# The Art of Decay

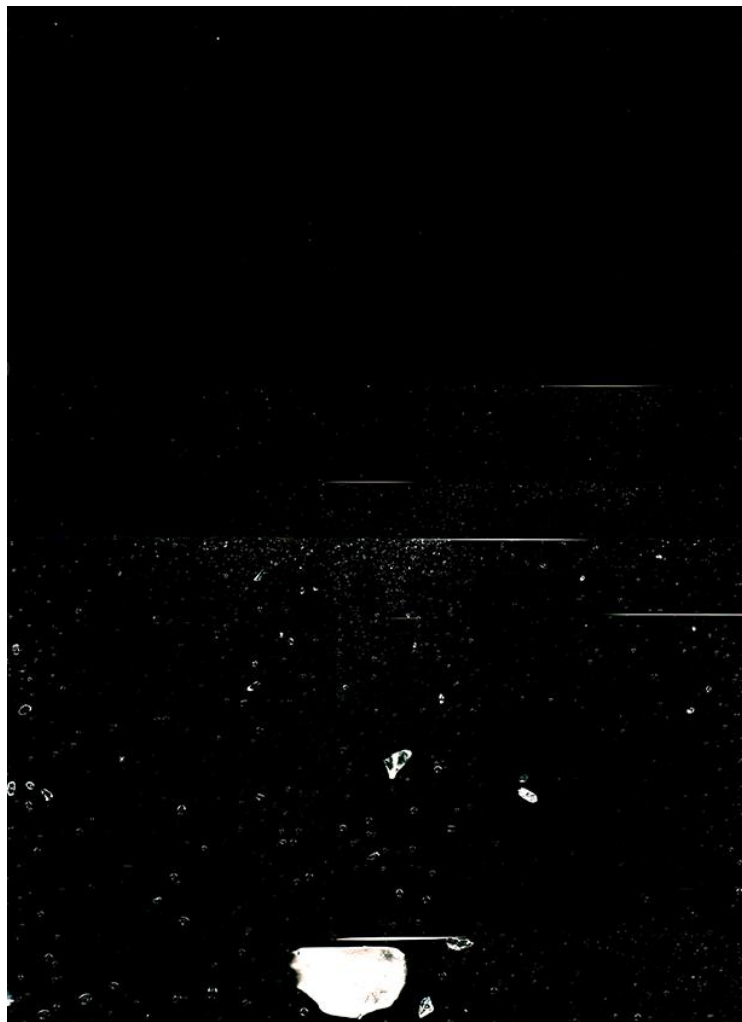
*by* Jacob Mikanowski *in* Criticism

The Art of Decay,  
Jacob Mikanowski.

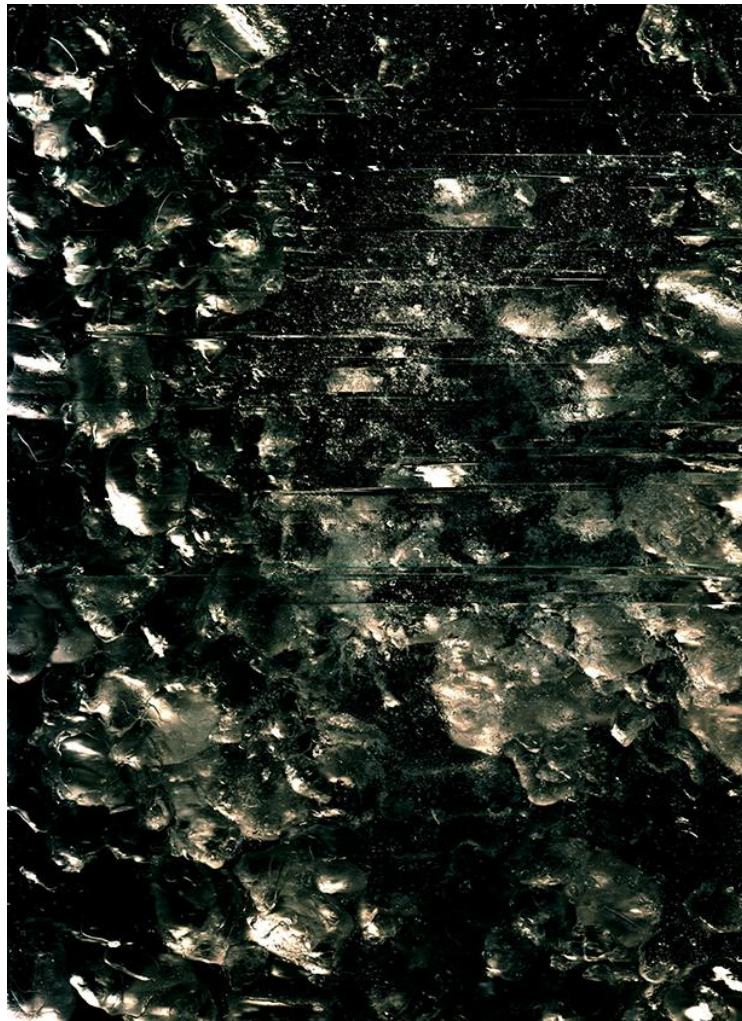


Automated Aura, Video  
Loop (58:45)  
2019

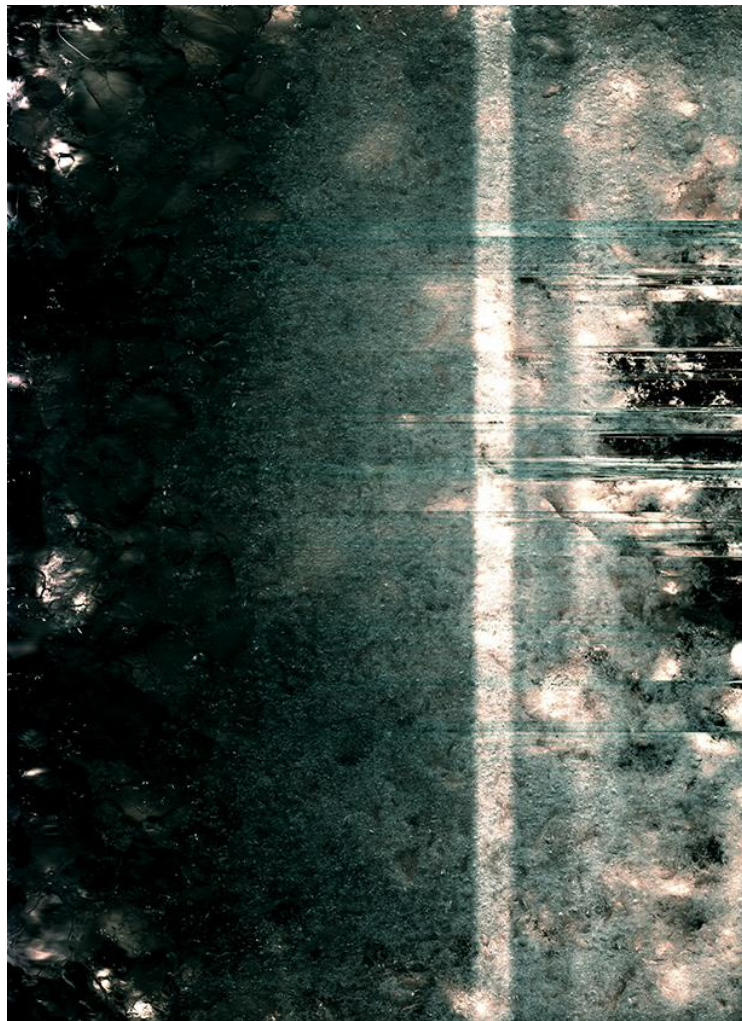




Automated Aura,  
Archival inkjet print,  
11x17"  
2019.



Automated Aura,  
Archival inkjet print,  
11x17"  
2019.



Automated  
Aura, Archival  
inkjet print,  
11x17"  
2019.





Automated Aura,  
Archival inkjet  
print, 11x17"  
2019.



The Parthenon,  
Frederic Edwin Church,  
1871.